

JUST THE FACTS: Health and Wellness

General Facts About Life Balance

What is Balance?

A balanced life is best achieved with a *holistic* approach. Holistic means that being balanced involves the mind *and* the body.

Balance is personal. It means living your life in a way that is consistent with your values and your beliefs. A neighbor might enjoying working on his bike alone in his garage for hours at a time or for an entire day on the weekends, whereas you might consider it boring to spend that much time alone on a hobby involving intricate mechanical work. Balancing life means finding and pursuing what is personally meaningful. You might feel balanced by ending the day with a family activity, whereas someone else might need an hour of alone time to unwind after everyone has gone to bed. Balance means **determining priorities** and spending time on the most important things. For some, spending time with children is more important than keeping the house spotlessly clean. **Balance is personal**. Find what works. Avoid making comparisons to how others find balance. When thinking about keeping your life in balance, consider the following:

- Family vs. Personal.
- Extraverted Activities (time with others) vs. Introverted Activities (time spent alone).
- Active vs. Passive.
- · Energy Expending vs. Energy Restoring.
- Awake vs. Asleep.

Because life is constantly changing, balance is not a static or unchanging thing. Moods ebb and flow. Needs and wants change. Duties and missions change, too. After returning from a deployment or a period away from family, you may find it difficult to jump back into "normal" life. To achieve balance, it might be necessary to spend a little bit of time with family members and more time alone. Later, balance might mean spending more time with family and less time alone. Over time, what's needed to achieve balance may totally change. Balance will change along with the major *and* the minor life events that will occur throughout your lifetime. Every now and then it's a good idea to assess if rebalancing is necessary. If life feels a bit "off," it may be time to re-evaluate where and how your time and energy are being spent.

Balance may involve doing more with your life. The body and the mind may crave more activity. This would be a time for new hobbies or for spending more time in hobbies that you've enjoyed in the past. Spending more time with friends or joining groups or clubs to make new friends are also good options. But balance may also involve cutting back. There are times when you might feel stretched too thin, with too many activities going on at the same time. Sometimes, the best thing to do is to give up some less important responsibilities.

Recognizing imbalance is an important first step. Figuring out how to get back in balance can be challenging, especially if there has been no thought about the kinds of activities that can recharge and replenish. Many health care providers, behavioral health professionals, and chaplains have received training to help identify imbalance and assist with restoring balance. Don't be afraid or embarrassed to ask for help! Remember that getting balance involves both your mind **and** your body (this is the holistic approach!)

Please note that while the Balancing Your Life "Just the Facts" sheets offer many ways to better balance your mind and body, we don't suggest you tackle all the activities offered at once. Rather, take some time to find the activities and suggestions that most appeal to you, and start there. Remember: balance is not a static state, but something that changes over time; it might be said that it's a path, not a destination. Walking that path is its own reward, forever challenging, yet always fulfilling.